



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 4/6/2006

GAIN Report Number: UK6013

United Kingdom

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

UK confirms first case of H5N1

2006

Approved by:

Besa L. Kotati
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Steve R. Knight

Report Highlights:

The Scottish Executive confirmed on April 6, 2006 that a dead swan found in Fife, a coastal region in Scotland was infected by the H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) virus. This development had long been expected as several neighboring countries, including France, have already confirmed cases of AI in wild fowl. According to the Scottish Executive, the dead mute swan had first been reported in Cellardyke, a coastal village in Fife, Scotland on the evening of March 29, 2006. It was collected the next day and arrived at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, the EU reference laboratory in Weybridge, England on March 31. Preliminary results showing the H5 virus were first known on April 5, 2006. At that time, the exact strain of the virus was not known.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
London [UK1]
[UK]

The Scottish Executive confirmed on April 6, 2006 that a dead swan found in Fife, a coastal region in Scotland (see map below) was infected by the H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) virus. This development had long been expected as several neighboring countries, including France, have already confirmed cases of AI in wild fowl.



According to the Scottish Executive, the dead mute swan had first been reported in Cellardyke, a coastal village in Fife, Scotland on the evening of March 29, 2006. It was collected the next day and arrived at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, the EU reference laboratory in Weybridge, England on March 31. Preliminary results showing the H5 virus were first known on April 5, 2006. At that time, the exact strain of the virus was not known. However, Exercise Hawthorn, a two-day UK exercise testing the UK's response to an AI outbreak was brought to an immediate end by the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer Debby Reynolds and, in accordance with EU rules a Protection Zone of a minimum of 3 kilometers radius and a Surveillance Zone of 10 kilometers radius was immediately put in place around the place where the dead swan was found. Keepers of birds in the protection zone were instructed to isolate their birds from wild birds, by taking them indoors wherever possible, and measures to restrict the movement of poultry, eggs and poultry products from these zones was brought into immediate effect.

The confirmation of the disease has also seen the Scottish Executive order poultry to be kept indoors throughout a 965 square mile Wild Bird Risk Zone (see map right). Further restrictions, such as housing and movement controls, are fully expected. These will be subject to veterinary risk assessment, of which a number are now reported to be ongoing. The Scottish Executive has already confirmed that a preliminary veterinary risk assessment has concluded that a mainland UK-wide poultry housing requirement would be disproportionate at this time.

According to sources at the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), there are no commercial poultry flocks within the 3 kilometer zone but one in the 10 kilometer zone. There are also at least eight backyard flocks in the zones. As the disease has been confirmed in a wild bird, none of these flocks face immediate slaughter. According to the Scottish Executive, the Wild Bird Risk Zone



contains around 3.1 million birds on 175 poultry farms, including 48 free-range premises with 260,000 birds which must now be housed indoors.

Increased surveillance is now in place across the country. Particular attention is inevitably being focused on the wild bird population, not least because the mute swan is a native breed that does not normally migrate long distances. This suggests that it contracted the virus from another bird arriving from overseas. Testing is currently being reported on fourteen dead birds, including swans in both Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The developments of the past three days have inevitably received heavy coverage in the UK media. Reporting has thus far been measured, focusing on the measures in place to control the spread of this animal disease and the risk to humans. On the latter point, advice from the UK Food Standards Agency remains that properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat. Guidance on handling and disposing of dead garden and wild birds has also been reiterated by the Government; the emphasis being on reporting suspicious poultry deaths to the authorities and thoroughly washing hands after direct contact with bird carcasses.

In recent weeks, some market sources have reporting a marginal decline in UK consumption of poultry meat. However, there is evidence of heavy price promotion which has limited this decline. The confirmation of H5N1 will surely be a test of UK consumer's resilience and the UK Government's ability to provide reassurance.

The Scottish Executive AI website, containing full details of the Contingency Plan being put in place, is:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/animal-welfare>

Defra are also placing regular updates on their AI webpages at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/disease/ai/index.htm>